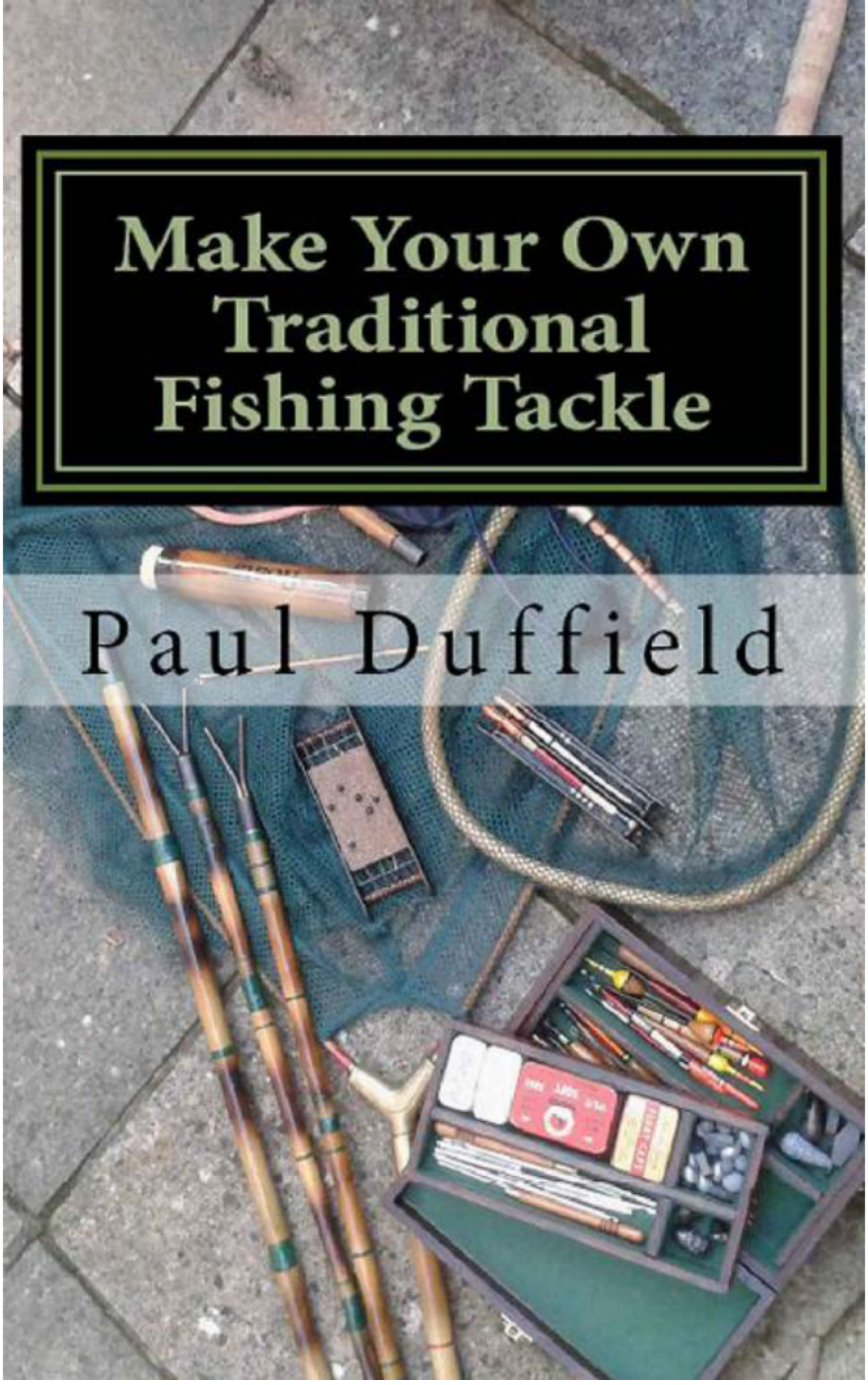
Make Your Own
Traditional
Fishing Tackle
Paul Duffield

Make Your Own Traditional Fishing Tackle

PAUL DUFFIELD

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1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been a revival in ‘traditional angling’. The definition of ‘traditional angling’ is a matter for personal choice, but one thing that many anglers who consider themselves to be ‘traditional’ have in common is a preference for fishing with tackle that is hand made using natural materials.

While modern fishing tackle is perfectly usable and efficient for it’s intended purpose, to many, modern plastics and other man made materials are less pleasing to the eye and seem out of place in a natural environment such as a river or tree lined lake.

While there is no shortage of split cane fishing rods, centrepin reels and traditional fishing floats to buy, both vintage and new, it is less easy to find traditional accessories such as wood and cane landing nets, cane net handles, bank sticks and rod rests. There are a few skilled craftsmen still making these items to a high standard, but waiting lists can be long and prices can be high.

When I first became interested in vintage and traditional fishing tackle I searched for books on tackle making so I could make my own. I found some books on float making and some very old books on rod building, but few on making general tackle items.

Those books I did find were mainly about making artificial baits such as spinners and flies or items that are not used today, such as gaffs and minnow traps, so the items described in this book came about from the application of common sense, trial and error, and helpful tips and suggestions from like minded anglers.

The purpose of this book is to provide the reader with the information needed to produce a range of traditional fishing tackle items that not only work, but look good too. There can be a lot of satisfaction in using traditional fishing tackle and methods, and if you are using tackle that you have made yourself, the satisfaction can be that much more.

While I would not want to pretend that these items can be made by anyone to the high standard that the few remaining craftsmen accomplish, making these items to a good standard is well within the capabilities and budget of most if not all anglers using inexpensive

readily available materials and basic tools.

For anglers who would like to use traditional fishing tackle but are on a restricted budget, the techniques described in this book can help to save many pounds over the cost of buying ready made items. If you only make a couple of cane rod rests or a handful of quill floats, the money you save will more than cover the cost of this book.

2 TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

In this chapter I will cover some basic tools and techniques that you will use when making many of the items in this book.

First we will consider tools and basic materials. If you have ever done any home DIY, you will have many of these items already. There is no need for a wide array of specialist tools, but you will find some tasks easier with a tool or gadget made for the purpose. Here's what you will need:

A saw suitable for cutting wood and cane such as a Tenon Saw.
A saw suitable for cutting metal such as a Junior Hacksaw.
A pipe cutter
3/8inch BSF tap
A selection of coarse, medium and fine grade abrasive paper suitable for sanding wood and metal.
A selection of medium and fine wire wool.
A selection of small craft or artists paint brushes
Sharp knife such as disposable craft knives or a Stanley knife
Razor blades
Some rod whipping thread.
Colour preserver or sealer for whippings
Waterproof varnish
White spirit or brush cleaner
Masking Tape
Strong two part epoxy glue

In the remainder of this chapter I will cover some basic techniques that will be referred to in later chapters.

Preparing New Cane

Ordinary garden cane available from garden centres can be used to make traditional rod rests and landing net handles, but it needs preparation to remove moisture, flatten nodes and make it straight.

Some cane is quite suitable with little or no drying if it has already been dried before being exported, and this cane can be recognised by its straw colour. Avoid cane that looks green or that has been left outside exposed to the elements and shows signs of rotting or water damage at the end.

Cane can be heated over a gas flame to remove any remaining moisture, but be careful not to leave the cane in the flame too long or it will scorch or burn. It is best to move the cane in and out of the flame while at the same time rotating it, to avoid overheating.

As the enamel on the outside of the cane is waterproof, the moisture will be driven to the end of the cane when heated and will steam or drip out of the end.

Preparing Reclaimed Cane

Cane reclaimed from old fishing rods is ideal for making traditional fishing tackle items such as banksticks and landing net handles.

To prepare reclaimed cane for use you need to remove old varnish and any rings and whippings that remain. Rings and whippings can be removed by either slicing through all of the whippings with a sharp knife, so the whole whipping can be peeled off in a singe piece, or cutting through the whipping at one end and unwinding it from the rod.

To remove old varnish, you can use a varnish stripper and this is a technique used by many rod restorers, but alternatively the varnish can be easily removed by carefully scraping it off with a craft knife, and finishing with fine sandpaper. If you use this technique, be careful that you do not press too hard with the knife and cut into the cane.

Straightening Cane

Cane sections are rarely straight and will need to be heated to remove bends and kinks. The techniques used for straightening whole cane sections can also be used to remove bends, known as ‘sets’ in split cane fishing rods.

To straighten cane is it necessary to heat it make it pliable and then bend the cane straight until it cools. I use a domestic gas ring to heat the cane, but other restorers use a variety of heating methods including candles, methylated spirit burners and even heat guns.

Whichever method you use, you must be careful not to overheat the cane. At best you will scorch it, at worst you may set fire to it!

The method I use is to hold the cane either side of the bend wearing a

pair of thick gardening gloves and rotate the cane just above the gas flame while simultaneously moving it in a figure of eight movement so no part of the cane is above the flame for long.

When the cane is just too hot to hold comfortably without gloves, it is hot enough, and you can bend the cane a little more than necessary to straighten it so it just bends a little the other way. Hold it in this position until it has cooled and release the tension. You may need to do this more than once if the bend is persistent.

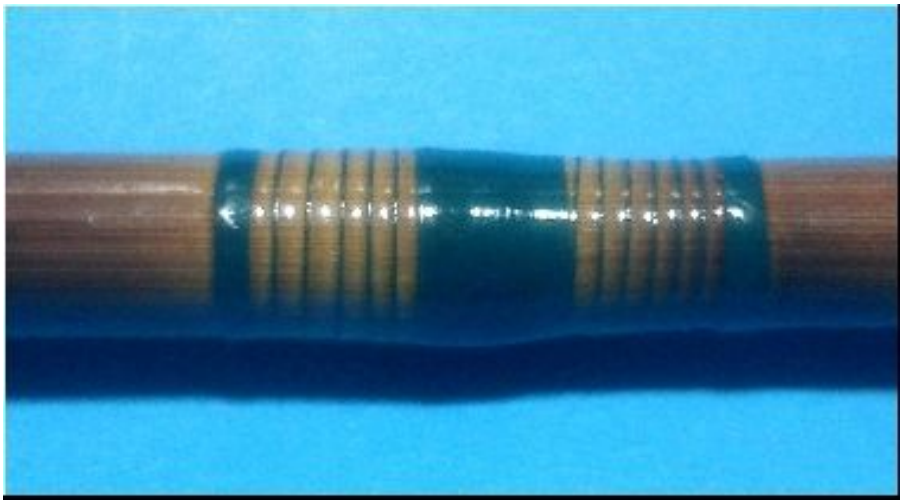
If there are several bends, start at one end of the cane and repeat the process for each bend working along the cane rather than trying to remove all bends in one go.

As soon as I am happy that the cane is as straight as I can get it, I rub a damp cloth over the heated area to cool it down.

Flattening Nodes

If the length of cane you are using has any nodes protruding from the cane these may be removed either by carefully cutting them with a craft knife or rubbing them flat with a wood file and finishing off with sandpaper.

It is not absolutely necessary to remove nodes when making rod rests or landing net handles, but it does result in a neater finish when the node is flattened and finished with a sealed thread whipping.



Flaming Cane

Flaming cane which is the process of scorching cane to discolour it was popular in the early days of cane fishing rods and many very early vintage rods have a flamed pattern.

It is quite easy to flame cane using the same techniques described earlier for drying cane and removing bends, you simply leave the cane in the flame a little longer until it starts to darken.

The longer the cane is heated, the darker it will become and you can create quite pleasing patterns by heating different parts of the cane to different degrees, but as before, be careful that you do not leave the cane in the flame for too long, or you may set fire to it.

When combined with decorative whippings, cane that has an irregular pattern of light, medium and dark areas has a pleasing and vintage appearance after sealing with varnish.

Polishing and Colouring Brass

For an authentic look, metal fittings on traditional fishing tackle items are usually made of brass. While polished brass can be attractive, a more traditional look can be achieved by chemically treating the brass so it takes on a blue/grey colour. This technique is known as bluing.

Brass can be cleaned and polished using fine wire wool. If you are able to obtain some old brass fittings and ferrules salvaged from old fishing rods, these cane often be restored to something very close to their original appearance.

To get the 'blued' finish I use a product called 'Brass Black' from a company called Birchwood Casey. This is a liquid used by gunsmiths to colour brass and I find it works well for the brass fittings of fishing rods and other fishing tackle.

There are alternative solutions that will do the same job, but these require more preparation before use, while the Birchwood Casey product can be used straight from the bottle.

First make sure that the brass is clean by wiping it with cotton wool and a little white spirit. Next apply the Brass Black liquid using a cotton bud, taking care to apply it evenly. Wait for 1 minute, and then rinse the brass with cold water. If you want a darker effect, repeat as many times as necessary.

Smaller items can be blued by fully immersing them in bluing solution for one minute before rinsing. A small jam jar is ideal and this has the advantage that the solution can then be retained for use many times before it needs to be replaced.

CAUTION: Brass Black is a dangerous substance, and poisonous if swallowed, so be careful to use it in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and store it safely out of the reach of children and animals.

The following picture shows a length of brass tube, available in various sizes from model shops, that has been partly blued using Brass Black.

Making a Simple Brass Ferrule Set

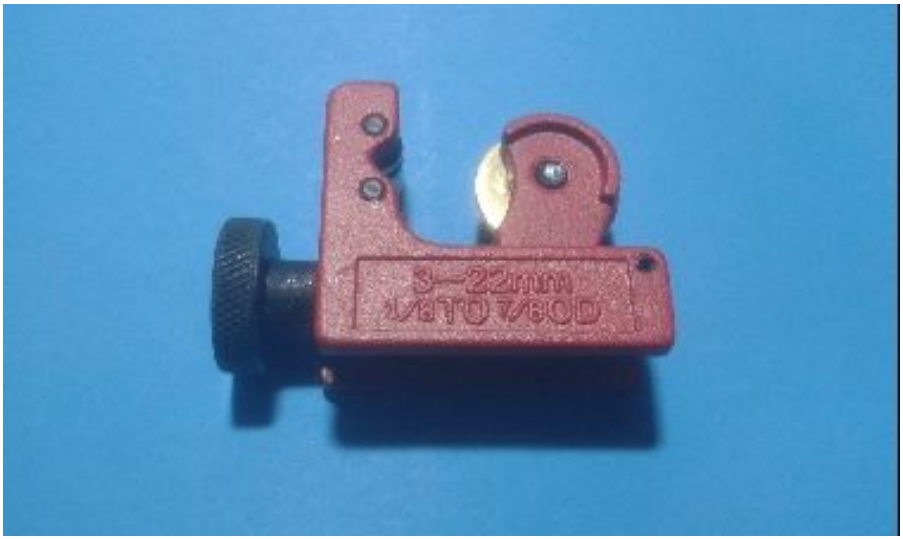
You can buy brass ferrule sets but these can be expensive and are not really necessary if you want a simple ferrule to join two sections of cane, such as a two part whole can landing net.

Model shops sell a range of brass tube in various thicknesses, each designed to fit inside the next larger size. While these are designed to be a loose fit, it is quite easy to reduce the size of the larger tube which will form the female ferrule so that the thinner section (male ferrule) is held in by friction.

There are various techniques to reduce the size of the tube, which many rod restorers also use to tighten loose ferrules on vintage fishing rods. You can use a bench vice, rotating the tube several times while gently tightening the vice, and others employ a similar technique using mole grips.

The technique I prefer is to use a modified pipe cutter to press two or three grooves into the tube so that there are a few thinner points where the male ferrule will make contact with the female.

To make the modified pipe cutter, remove the cutting blade and replace with a brass or steel washer.



When the modified pipe cutter is tightened around the brass tube and rotated, you will find that it makes a small groove in the tube which protrudes into the inside of the tube, reducing its diameter at that point.

You may need to tighten and rotate the pipe cutter several times to get the fit you need, but check regularly by inserting the male ferrule into the tube to check the fit as this technique is surprisingly effective and it is easy to reduce the tube more than you need.

The grooves in the following picture are exaggerated to demonstrate the technique. Usually the tube will require minimal reduction and the grooves will not be noticeable.

Whippings for attaching rings, supporting joints and decoration

Thread has been used for centuries to provide support and strength at stress points on fishing rods as well as attaching rod rings and is still used today.

The technique, whether for strength or decoration is the same, and it is the same technique that is still used to attach rings to modern fishing rods, only the techniques and materials used for sealing the whippings against the elements has changed.

Suitable thread is readily available and can be obtained from eBay, various online retailers and many tackle shops. Make sure that you get thread purpose made for sealing with varnish or glue, any thread described as for rod whipping will be suitable. You cannot use ordinary cotton as it will not have a smooth finish after sealing.

There are many grades of whipping thread available, and some are very expensive. If I was working on a 'special' project, I might use one of the more expensive silk threads, but for most work I find nylon thread to be perfectly adequate.

Thread comes in various thicknesses, graded from 'A' to 'D', 'A' being the thinnest. For most work I prefer to use a grade 'C' as its additional thickness means less turns, and its easier to work with, but I sometimes use grade A or B if I want a more delicate result. I rarely use grade 'D' except on thick cane as I find it results in a 'bulky' finish.

Whipping can be tricky and you often wish you had an extra hand when finishing off. For a while now, I've been using a bobbin holder that is used for holding thread when tying fishing flies. These are inexpensive and can save a lot of time.

Because the bobbin holds the thread in place, you can actually let go of it and it will hold the whipping tight while you tighten the coils or finish off. It also stops a spool of thread from falling off a worktop or table.

To illustrate this technique I will use the example of replacing a rod ring. Exactly the same technique is used to add strengthening or decorative whippings, for example on rod rests or landing net handles.

When whipping rings you may find it helps to secure the ring by one leg with masking tape. Some people glue the rings in place, but I don't like to do that as the cane can be damaged if you need to replace a ring in the future.

After securing the ring to the rod, start by trapping the loose end of the thread by wrapping a coil over it, and add further coils by turning the rod while keeping the thread under tension. You will probably need to stop every few turns to tighten and straighten the coils so the whipping is neat. I find it easiest to do this with my thumbnail. After about 8 to 10 turns, trim the loose end of the thread.

Continue adding coils until you are have gone past the end of the leg of the ring by about a third of its length. At this point, trap a loop of 2lb fishing line under the thread, and continue adding coils for about 8 to 10 turns.

We are now ready to finish off the whipping. Cut the thread, leaving enough free to pass through the loop of fishing line, and then pull the two loose ends of the fishing line to draw the loose end of the thread under the last few coils.

Check that everything is neat and tight, using you thumbnail or a cocktail stick to push the coils together, and then use a sharp knife to trim the loose thread close to the point it exits the coils.

Don’t worry if the whipping doesn’t look perfect - you can tidy everything up by tightening the coils, again with your thumbnail or a cocktail stick, and even out any gaps by gently rubbing a cocktail stick over the top of the whipping.

If everything has gone according to plan, you should have a neat whipping securing one leg of the butt ring as shown in the picture above.
Remove the masking tape, and repeat the process to whip over the other leg. The process for whippings at the base of ferrules, and intermediate whippings is the same, except that you need to trap the loop of fishing line sooner for intermediates as they are narrower than those for rings and ferrules.

Sealing whippings

With modern materials its much easier to seal whippings and this is usually a two stage process involving sealing the whippings with a thin fast drying water based adhesive, followed by a single coat of two part epoxy resin.

Although I could use this same process to seal the whippings on a cane rod, and some restorers do, I much prefer to ‘do things the old way’ and apply several coats of varnish to both the whippings and the rod. I do use a water based sealer on the whippings first though, as this is necessary to prevent the varnish from discolouring the nylon thread, or even making it transparent.

Some rods deliberately have translucent whippings, so if you want this effect applying varnish directly to the whippings without sealer will let you achieve this, but I’ve found that different colours and threads from different manufacturers give varying results, so try it on a sample whipping first.

There are various products available for sealing whippings, usually sold as colour preserver. I’m not too fussy about which brand I use as they all give similar results, and these days I usually use two or three

costs of PVA glue diluted with an equal part of water.

Alternative products that can be used to seal whippings include cellulose dope, banana oil and French polish.

From the following picture you'll see that I have not trimmed the ends of the intermediate whippings. This is because they could easily unravel, and I prefer to trim the ends after applying the sealer.

Apply the whipping sealer generously with a small soft brush, and work it into the thread. Remove any excess carefully with a soft cloth, and leave to dry. The drying time varies, but mostly this should only take a few minutes. The instructions say that one coat is sufficient, but I prefer to apply two to make sure all of the whipping is properly sealed.

I prefer to leave whippings for 24 hours after applying the final coat of sealer before applying varnish.

Applying varnish

To finish the rod we now need to apply varnish to the whippings and the blank.

There is no right or wrong way to do this. Some rod restorers thin the varnish before applying, some apply the varnish with a brush, others with a finger, some dip the rod in a varnish bath, others spray the varnish on to the blank.

You can experiment with different methods to find the right way for you, but I will describe a method that allows me to finish a rod with

varnish to a standard I'm happy with using relatively inexpensive varnish and without specialised tools or a drying room.

I don't thin the varnish as some recommend, I use it straight from the tin. I have used several different varnishes with good results, but I find I get the best results with the 'International' brand of Yacht Varnish. It doesn't alter the colour of the blank very much, is easy to apply and doesn't run if its not applied too thickly.

When I want a darker finish, I use ordinary Ronseal outdoor varnish. Its not so easy to apply as its thicker and you have to be more careful, but when I want a deep rich finish it does the job well. For a high shine I use clear gloss, but I have used the satin version when I wanted a non-reflective finish.

Recently I have been using a varnish that I believe is made for wood floors; Mylands Number 8. So far I have had good results with it, and it does have the advantage that it dries quicker than other varnishes but it is more expensive.

To apply the varnish I use a small artists paintbrush no more than 3mm thick so I have a lot of control but you could use a thicker brush if you prefer.

I apply two coats to the whippings alone before varnishing over the whole rod including the whippings with up to four more coats. Between coats I remove any minor imperfections by rubbing over the blank VERY gently with the finest grade of wire wool. Irrespective of what drying time is says on the tin, I always wait 24 hours between coats.

Varnishing the whippings is fairly easy as you're working in a clearly defined area - just start at the edge and apply varnish by rotating the rod with the brush held against the whipping. Make sure the varnish is evenly distributed by going over it with the brush before moving to the next whipping.

After the whippings have had two coats and thoroughly dried, I start at one end of the rod and apply varnish to the whipping at that end. When I reach the end of the whipping, I apply varnish directly to the adjacent part of the blank, again by rotating the rod, but I then brush up and down the blank to the next whipping while rotating the rod as I find it easier to get an even finish. Once I reach the next whipping I repeat the process until the whole rod section has been varnished.

Effectively I treat two adjacent whippings and the rod between them as separate sections. That way I am always working with a small area which I find makes it easier to apply the varnish evenly.

With some varnishes you may need to rotate the rod during drying to avoid runs or build up of varnish, but with 'International' Yacht Varnish I have found that as long as I do not apply too much varnish in each coat, I can just prop the rod against a wall and leave it to dry.

Cleaning and re-threading bank sticks and landing net handles

The thread on bank sticks and landing net handles can become clogged with dirt and grime and brass threads can become damaged making it difficult to screw in rod rest heads and landing net handles. Also some of the projects in this book call for using hex nuts which have to be glued into position and you may find that some of the glue gets into the thread causing the same problem.

The solution is to use a 3/8inch BSF (British Standard Fine) tap to clear any dirt or glue and repair damaged threads. This will not repair threads that have been stripped or worn away, but in many cases it will solve the problem and return the thread to a usable state.

Taps of the correct size are readily available and inexpensive, so its

well worth having one as it will pay for itself with the first one or two repairs.

3 WHOLE CANE BANK STICK

A whole cane bank stick is an attractive accessory when fishing with traditional cane rods and is easy to make using basic tools and materials.

Materials you will need

Whole bamboo cane approx 15mm thick
Dowel 80mm long and 15mm thick
Brass tube 80mm long and 15mm internal diameter
Steel or brass hex nut, 3/8" BSF bore
Brass hose ferrule approx 15mm internal diameter
Whipping thread
Two part epoxy adhesive
Whipping Sealer
Waterproof varnish
Dark wood stain (optional)
Brass Black or other suitable bluing solution (optional)

Instructions

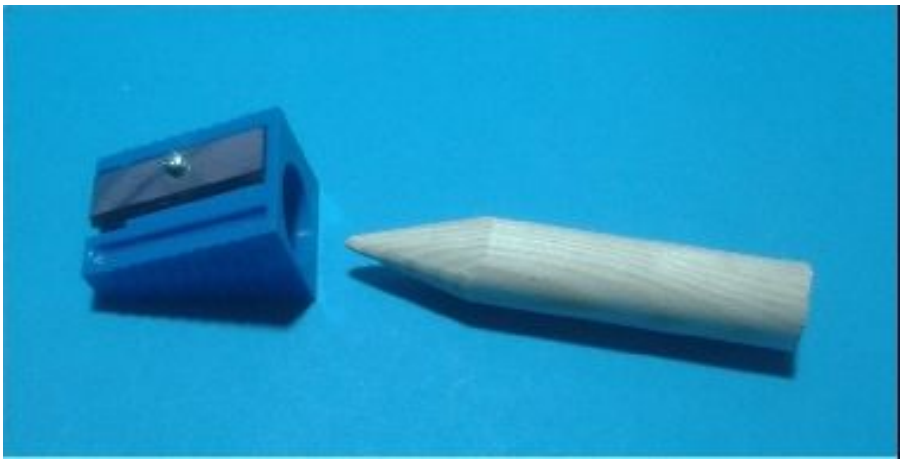
First decide how long you want your bank stick to be. I find it useful to have bank sticks in two lengths so I can use the most appropriate length for sloping and uneven banks. I find that carrying two bank sticks, one of 600mm, approximately 2ft and one of 450mm, approximately 18in cope with most situations.

Having decided the length of your bank stick, cut a section of 15mm thick bamboo cane that is 80mm less than the final length you require.
Using the techniques described in chapter 2, dry and straighten the cane, flatten any nodes and optionally flame the cane.

The next step is to make a point so you can push the bank stick in the ground. If you have access to a lathe or suitable tools you can sharpen a point on a length of hardwood dowel. You can instead use softwood dowel for this which can be sharpened more easily and I usually do, but on hard banks it will wear and flatten requiring replacement more often.

If you do use softwood dowel you can easily sharpen a point on it

using a large pencil sharpener. I prefer to darken the dowel with wood stain, but you can leave the colour natural if you prefer.



The dowel will require two or three coats of waterproof varnish to protect it. I prefer to apply varnish before assembly, but you can leave the varnishing stage until you have assembled the bank stick if you wish.

To assemble the bank stick, you need to be able to fit the brass tube over one end and the hose ferrule over the other, so prepare the cane so that these will slide over the ends of the cane but are not too loose.

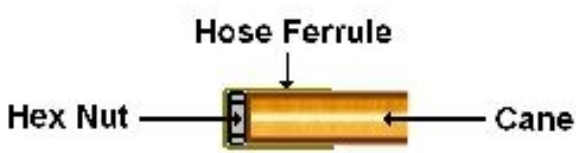
If you need to remove a lot of material to fit the brass tube, you can strengthen the cane at this point by gluing a section of dowel inside the cane.

If you intend to blue the brass tube and hose clip, this is easier done before it is attached to the cane. Refer to chapter 2 for directions on bluing brass.

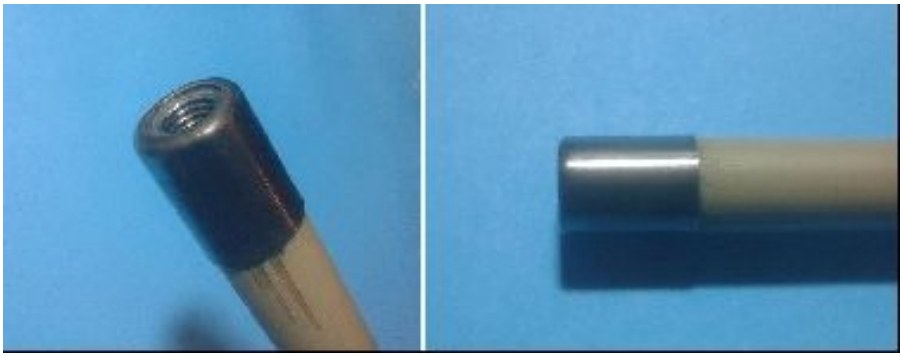
Having prepared the cane and dowel point, assemble the bank stick by gluing the brass tube over one end of the cane and over the blunt end of the pointed dowel so that the cane and dowel meet in the middle of the brass tube. I prefer to use two part epoxy adhesive, but a different strong glue may be substituted if you prefer.

The thread for rod rest heads and keep nets will pass through the thinner hole at the end of the hose ferrule, through the hex nut and into the hollow part of the bamboo cane, so if necessary hollow out the cane to a suitable size. The pith inside the cane is quite soft so this can be done quite easily with a thin knife or suitably sized flat head screwdriver.

Next, glue the hex nut inside the hose ferrule and glue the nut and ferrule assembly over the other end of the bamboo cane so that the nut is resting tight against the cane.



Make sure you use plenty of glue to ensure that the nut does not twist inside the hose ferrule when inserting or removing rod rest heads etc. I use a cocktail stick to push glue into the gaps between the hex nut and the hose ferrule.



You could now just apply a few coats of waterproof varnish, but it is a good idea to whip over the cane where it is joined to the brass to provide strength and support. I also prefer to whip over the nodes and add some decorative whips along the length of the cane. Refer to chapter 2 for directions on applying and sealing whippings.

The final step is to apply two or three coats of waterproof varnish. Any waterproof varnish designed for outdoor use should will be fine. I have had success with the International brand of Marine varnish and Ronseal outdoor varnish, the latter being quite dark when several coats are applied giving more of an aged or vintage look.

4 LIGHTWEIGHT WHOLE CANE ROD REST

A fixed head rod rest is a lightweight alternative to a threaded bank stick and rod rest head as you can use thinner cane. I find this to be ideal when I want to travel light and move often during the day such as when I am roving on a river.

Materials you will need

Whole bamboo cane approx 12mm thick
Dowel 80mm long and 12mm thick
Brass tube 80mm long and 12mm internal diameter
Two pieces of brass rod, 80mm long and 4mm thick
Brass hose ferrule approx 12mm internal diameter
Whipping thread
Two part epoxy adhesive
Whipping Sealer
Waterproof varnish
Dark wood stain (optional)
Brass Black or other suitable bluing solution (optional)

Instructions

The instructions are similar to those for the whole cane bank stick in the previous chapter with many steps and techniques the same, but I will repeat them here for clarity.

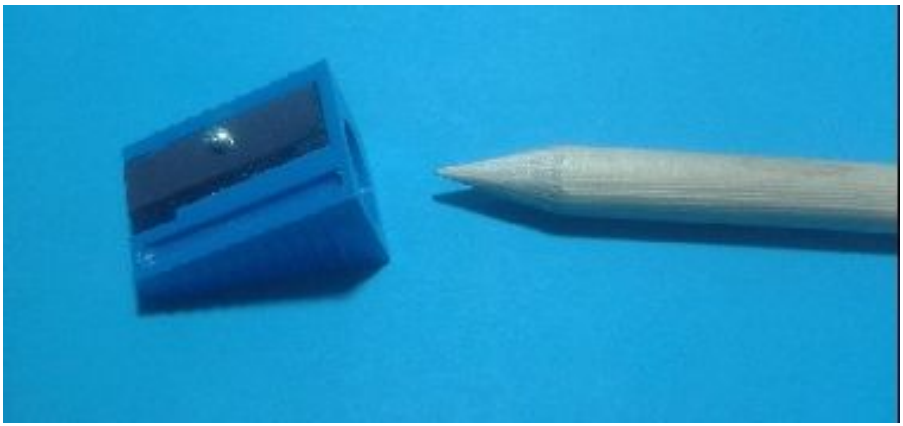
First decide how long you want your rod rest to be. I find a length of 600mm, approximately 2ft to be a useful size but you may want to make a few in different lengths so you are prepared for a range of conditions. In particular, if you sometimes fish rivers from high banks, a short rod rest of about 8 inches can be very useful.

Having decided the length of your rod rest, cut a section of 12mm thick bamboo cane that is 80mm less than the final length you require.

Using the techniques described in chapter 2, dry and straighten the cane, flatten any nodes and optionally flame the cane.

The next step is to make a point so you can push the bank stick in the ground. If you have access to a lathe or suitable tools you can sharpen a point on a length of hardwood dowel. You can instead use softwood dowel for this which can be sharpened more easily and I usually do, but it will wear and flatten requiring replacement more often.

If you do use softwood dowel you can easily sharpen a point on it using a large pencil sharpener. I prefer to darken the dowel with wood stain, but you can leave the colour natural if you prefer.



The dowel will require two or three coats of waterproof varnish to protect it. I prefer to apply varnish before assembly, but you can leave the varnishing stage until you have assembled the rod rest if you wish.

To assemble the rod rest, you need to be able to fit the brass tube over one end and the hose ferrule over the other, so prepare the cane so that these will slide over the ends of the cane but are not too loose.

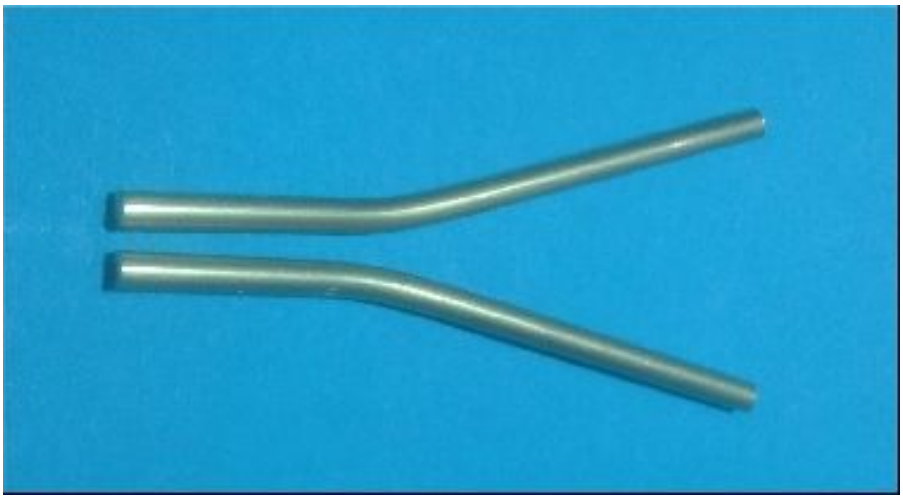
If you need to remove a lot of material to fit the brass tube, you can strengthen the cane at this point by gluing a section of dowel inside the cane.

If you intend to blue the brass rod, brass tube and hose clip, this is

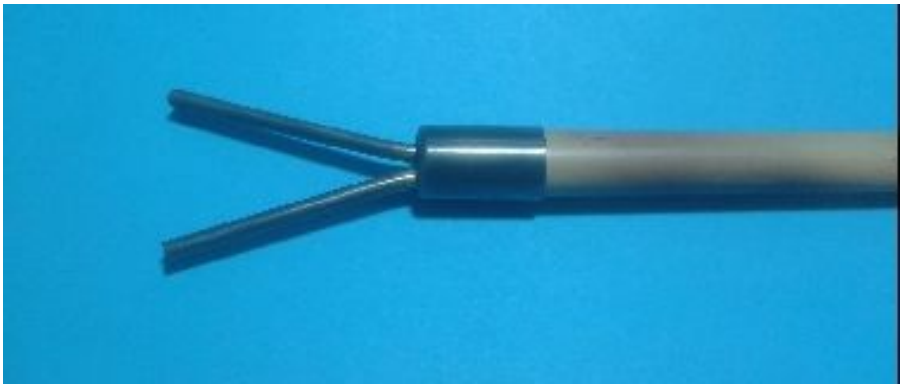
easier done before it is attached to the cane. Refer to chapter 2 for directions on bluing brass.

Having prepared the cane and dowel point, assemble the bank stick by gluing the brass tube over one end of the cane and over the blunt end of the pointed dowel so that the cane and dowel meet in the middle of the brass tube. I prefer to use two part epoxy adhesive, but a different strong glue may be substituted if you prefer.

Next you need to bend the two sections of brass rod as shown in the following picture so that when placed together they will form a V.



Glue the hose ferrule over the other end of the bamboo cane and glue the brass rods inside the hollow part of the cane to form the fixed V shaped head as shown in the following picture.



Put the assembled rod rest aside until the glue has set firmly, following the instructions for your choice of glue.

You could now just apply a few coats of waterproof varnish, but it is a good idea to whip over the cane where it is joined to the brass to provide strength and support. I also prefer to whip over the nodes and add some decorative whips along the length of the cane. Refer to chapter 2 for directions on applying and sealing whippings.

The final step is to apply waterproof varnish to protect the cane from water and mud when in use. You should apply at least two or three coats, but you can add more coats if you wish to get a smoother or deeper finish.

Any waterproof varnish designed for outdoor should will be fine. I have had success with the International brand of Marine varnish and Ronseal outdoor varnish, the latter being quite dark when several coats are applied giving more of an aged or vintage look.

The finished rod rest:

5 WHOLE CANE TWO PART LANDING NET HANDLE

A whole cane landing net handle will compliment a traditional landing net and is just as practical as a modern fibreglass or carbon version, albeit a little heavier.

Materials you will need

Whole bamboo cane approx 17mm thick
Brass tube 40mm long and 17mm internal diameter (optional)
Steel or brass hex nut, 3/8" BSF bore
Brass hose ferrule approx 17mm internal diameter
Brass Ferrule set with a diameter inside the male section of approx 17mm (refer to chapter 2 for instructions on making a simple brass ferrule set)
Whipping thread
Two part epoxy adhesive
Whipping Sealer
Waterproof varnish
Brass Black or other suitable bluing solution (optional)
Threaded end cap and rubber button, walking stick ferrule or brass hose ferrule of approx 17mm diameter at the open end.

Instructions

The instructions are similar to those for the whole cane bank stick in chapter 3 with many steps and techniques the same, but I will repeat them here for clarity.
First decide how long you want your landing net handle to be. If you only want a handle of 4-5 ft you can if you prefer make it in one section and dispense with the section on attaching ferrules.

When selecting the bamboo, try to get canes with as little taper as possible. If you can only source cane with a steep taper, make sure it is close to 16mm at the thin end, and if necessary use larger diameter ferrules to join the two sections.

Having decided the length of your landing net handle, cut two sections of bamboo cane each approximately half of the final length you require, but make the lower section a little shorter to allow for

the length of female ferrule that will protrude over the end, and for the butt button if you are using one.

If you are able to find a single length of cane of a suitable diameter and taper, you can joint it with the ferrule at the point where you cut if, but if you have to use two different pieces of cane, try to get the diameter sat the mid point where the cane will be jointed as close to the same diameter as possible.

Using the techniques described in chapter 2, dry and straighten the cane, flatten any nodes and optionally flame the cane.

To assemble the landing net handle, you need to be able to fit the 40mm brass tube and hose ferrule over the end of the upper section, the male ferrule over the bottom of the upper section and the female ferrules over the top of the lower section. Prepare the cane so that these will slide over the ends of the cane but are not too loose.

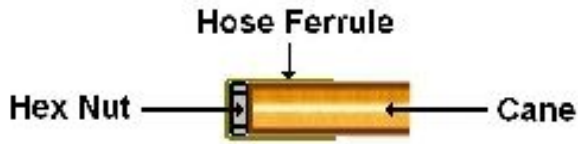
If the cane at the ferrule station is narrower than the internal diameter of either ferrule, you can compensate for this by wrapping a few turns of whipping thread over the cane prior to fitting and gluing the ferrule. This is a common technique that was often used to secure ferrules on cane fishing rods.

If you intend to blue the brass tube and hose clip, this is easier done before it is attached to the cane. Refer to chapter 2 for directions on bluing brass.

The thread of the landing net will pass through the thinner hole at the end of the hose ferrule, through the hex nut and into the hollow part of the bamboo cane, so if necessary hollow out the cane to a suitable size. The pith inside the cane is quite soft so this can be done quite easily with a thin knife or suitably sized flat head screwdriver.

Next, if you are using the 40mm length of brass tube to strengthen the top of the handle, slide it over the top of the upper section. This extra length of brass tube is not necessary if the handle will see only light use, but it does provide extra strength at the stress point and is recommended for large nets when fishing for larger fish such as carp and large barbel.

Glue the hex nut inside the hose ferrule over the end of the cane so that the nut is resting tight against the cane and, if used, butt the brass tube up against the hose ferrule and secure it with glue.



Make sure you use plenty of glue to ensure that the nut does not twist inside the hose ferrule when inserting or removing the landing net head. I use a cocktail stick to push glue into the gaps between the hex nut and the hose ferrule.

The following pictures show the head with reinforcement (left) and without (right).

The ferrules are fitted in a similar way, with the male ferrule flush against the end of the cane, and the female protruding beyond the end of the cane to leave enough room for the male to be pushed in. Remember to attach the male ferrule to the upper section and the female to the lower.

You now need to shape the bottom of the lower section to fit your choice of end cap. If you wish to use a rubber button, either buy a threaded end cap or follow the instructions above to make a similar connection at the end of the butt section using a hose ferrule and hex nut.

Alternatively if you do not want to use a rubber button you can finish the end of the handle with a walking stick ferrule such as shown in the following picture on the right..

You could now just apply a few coats of waterproof varnish, but it is a good idea to whip over the cane where it is joined to the brass to provide strength and support. I also prefer to whip over the nodes and add some decorative whips along the length of the cane. Refer to chapter 2 for directions on applying and sealing whippings.

The final step is to apply waterproof varnish to protect the cane from water and mud when in use. You should apply at least two or three coats, but you can add more coats if you wish to get a smoother or deeper finish.

Any waterproof varnish designed for outdoor should will be fine. I have had success with the International brand of Marine varnish and Ronseal outdoor varnish, the latter being quite dark when several coats are applied giving more of an aged or vintage look.

6 BAMBOO FLOAT TUBE

A traditional bamboo float tube is an attractive and practical alternative to plastic tubes for transporting floats and is easy to make using some basic techniques.

Materials you will need

Bamboo cane approx 35 to 60mm thick
Cork bung with a diameter at the thin end that will fit snugly inside the bamboo cane
Wood plug to fit the interior diameter of the bamboo cane
Whipping thread
Whipping Sealer
Waterproof varnish
Permanent marker or decorative transfers (optional)

Instructions

Garden centres sell thick bamboo cane for use as fence posts and you can get one for just a few pounds that will make several float tubes, but be careful when selecting one that it does not have too many splits along the length of the cane.

A float tube of about 35mm diameter is a useful pocket size to carry a few quills for a day on the river, while a larger 50mm to 60mm tube will hold enough floats to allow you to cope with a wide range of fishing situations.

Cut a length of bamboo to the size that you require. A length of 150mm, approximately 6in will be fine for short quill floats, or a length of 200 to 250cm, approximately 8in to 10in will be more suitable for carrying longer floats such as Wagglers.

If possible cut the cane between the nodes so you have a uniform hollow tube, but if you need to include a node to get the length you require, you can bore out the dam wall by pushing through it with a drill or screwdriver and smoothing the walls with a wood file.

Measure the internal diameter of the tube and obtain a cork bung, sold as jar closures on eBay and online retailers, that fits snugly. You will also need to make a wooden plug to close one end of the tube. A

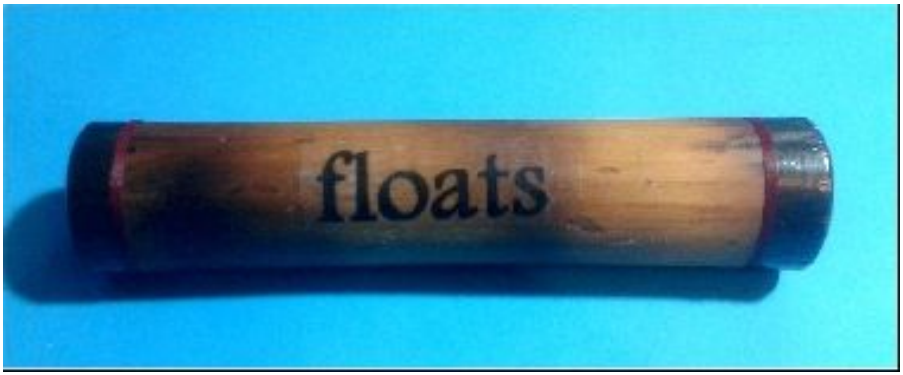
5mm section cut from suitable sized dowel will be ideal, but may need final shaping to fit.

If necessary, flatten the node so the cane is a smooth parallel tube, and dry and optionally flame the cane using the techniques described in chapter 2.

The cane will be hollow, but the soft pith should be sanded smooth using sandpaper wrapped around a length of dowel. Alternatively if you have woodworking files, these can be used instead.

To complete the basic construction of the float tube, glue the end plug into one end of the tube and leave to dry, then sand smooth. Optionally use wood stain to match the colour of the plug to the cane.

Once you have made the basic tube you can decorate it with whipping thread using the techniques described in chapter 2. If you wish you can also paint or stain it and add hand drawn artwork or writing using a permanent marker or transfers.



Finally seal the whippings and apply several coats of outdoor waterproof varnish to complete your float tube.

7 SPLIT CANE LANDING NET HEAD

A landing net with split cane arms will complement the landing net handle described in chapter 5 and can be made using many of the techniques already described in this book.

These instructions are for making a lightweight landing net with 600mm/24 inch arms suitable for general fishing for small fish such as roach and dace.

If you want to make a larger net suitable for landing carp or large barbel, increase the given sizes proportionately, in particular you should make the arms using stronger thicker cane.

Materials you will need

600mm/24 inch triangular landing net mesh
Two equal lengths of scrap split cane approx 8mm thick at the wider end and 600mm long
Alloy spreader block that will comfortably take 8mm arms
Two lengths of brass tube 40mm in length with an internal diameter of approximately 8mm
Two ¼ inch brass pipe nipples
600mm of 1.5mm cord such as paracord
Two part epoxy adhesive
Whipping thread
Whipping Sealer
Waterproof varnish
Gold or brass coloured paint (optional)
Brass Black or other suitable bluing solution (optional)

Instructions

This is a very simple design comprising 2 lengths of split cane (you can substitute hardwood dowel if split cane is not available) joined by a length of cord which is inserted into an alloy spreader block to form a triangular landing net.

The first stage is to prepare the split cane arms to take the brass pipe nipples (you can substitute any similar connection, such as brake cable ends) which will retain the cord at the thinner ends of the cane, and the brass tubes or ferrules which will be inserted into the spreader

block.

If you plan to blue the brass pipe nipples this is easier done before assembling the arms by immersing the nipples in bluing solution as described in chapter 2.

After preparing the cane, glue the brass tubes or ferrules in place and then insert the cord into each of the pipe nipples as shown and knot the cord so it is retained in the nipples.

Glue the nipples over the thin ends of the two cane arms so that you now have two cane arms joined by the cord, and put aside until the glue has fully set.

To complete the arms, whip over the pipe nipples and ferrules, and add decorative intermediate whippings if desired. Finally seal the whippings and varnish the arms using the directions in chapter 2.

Thread a suitable landing net mesh over the arms and cord to complete the net, and insert the two brass ferruled ends into the spreader block (painted with gold or brass coloured paint if desired), which is screwed into a landing net handle.

8 WHOLE CANE HOOP LANDING NET HEAD

In this chapter I will describe the steps to make a one piece hoop landing net head using bamboo cane.

As this involves heating and bending the cane to the shape required I have found this method to be most suitable for making small pear shaped landing net heads similar to the scoop nets used by many fly anglers, but with practice and patience larger nets can be made which are suitable for larger fish.

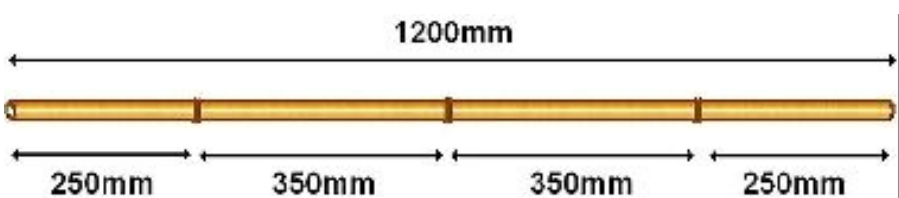
Materials you will need

Landing net mesh suitable for a circular or oval net of 350mm/14in diameter
Length of bamboo cane approx 14mm diameter and 1200mm long
Alloy spreader block that will take 12mm – 14mm arms
Waterproof varnish
Glue (optional)
Whipping thread (optional)
Whipping Sealer (optional)
Gold or brass coloured paint (optional)

Instructions

First select and cut a length of bamboo cane so that it resembles the following diagram with three equally spaced nodes approximately 350mm apart with the two outer nodes 250mm from the cut ends of the cane.

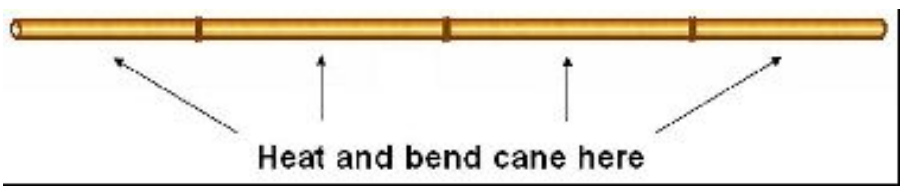
Choose cane with very little taper so that the diameter of both cut ends is close to 14mm.



Reduce the diameter at both ends of the cane by shaving with a sharp knife, and then by smoothing with sandpaper so that both ends are a snug fit in the spreader block.

Next we need to heat the cane and bend it to the shape required. The reason we have cut the cane so that it has three nodes with the central node at the mid-point is so that we only have to bend between nodes which is much easier than trying to bend cane at the node where it is thicker.

We will bend the cane at each of the points shown in the following diagram. This step cannot be rushed, each bend needs to be done separately in stages by heating the cane, bending as far as possible without splitting it, re-heating and bending again until the desired shape is achieved.

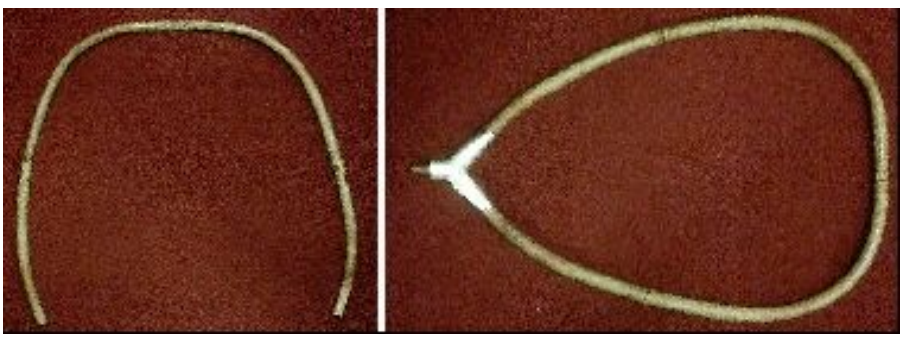


To bend the cane it is necessary to heat it make it pliable and then hold it in the bent position until it cools. I use a domestic gas ring to heat the cane,
holding it either side of the area to be bent. The cane will become too hot to hold so a pair of thick gardening gloves is useful.

Hold the cane above the flame and rotate it while simultaneously moving it in a figure of eight movement so no part of the cane is above the flame for long. When the cane starts to feel pliable, bend it as far as possible before you start to feel resistance and hold it in this position until it has cooled a little.

Repeat until you have bent the cane to the shape shown on the left in the following picture and wait until it has completely cooled.

You should find that the cane is sufficiently pliable to fit it into the spreader block as shown on the right in the following picture.



Remove the cane from the spreader block and apply two coats of waterproof varnish. Before applying the varnish, you may, if you wish, flame the cane and add decorative whippings.

You may also wish to paint the spreader block with gold or brass coloured paint if you prefer a more traditional finish to the silver colour of modern alloy spreader blocks.

Finally, slide the net mesh into position and glue the ends of the cane into the spreader block using strong glue such as two part epoxy. Due to the natural tendency of the cane to straighten which could cause it to pull out of the spreader block, support the cane to keep it under tension until the glue has fully set.

The interior of the finished net measures 260mm/10.5in at its widest point, and 400mm/16in from the top to the spreader block. Coupled with a short whole cane handle of 1200mm/4ft I find it ideal for roach, dace, perch and modestly sized chub when roving on small overgrown streams. See chapter 5 for instructions on making an cane landing net handle and chapter 9 for instructions on making a short handle for trout fishing.

Larger nets can be made by increasing the length of cane and, if necessary, the number of nodes. You may need to bend the cane at more points, but always have an odd number of evenly spaced nodes with one at the mid point of the cane.

9 CORK SCOOP NET HANDLE

This simple handle will convert the whole cane hoop landing net head described in the previous chapter, or any small pear shaped landing net head into a scoop net suitable for fly fishing or wading on rivers and streams.

Materials you will need

Cork fly rod handle 200mm length with 16mm bore
Length of bamboo cane 16mm diameter and 210mm length
Length of dowel 15mm diameter and 20mm length
Steel or brass hex nut, 3/8" BSF bore
Brass hose ferrule approx 17mm internal diameter
Glue
Waterproof varnish
4mm Paracord or Leather strip 500mm length (optional)

Instructions

This handle uses a preformed cork fly rod handle. It is usually possible to obtain these for a few pounds on eBay but if you are unable to obtain a suitable handle at a reasonable price, a parallel cork handle section or individual cork shives which are readily available can be substituted.

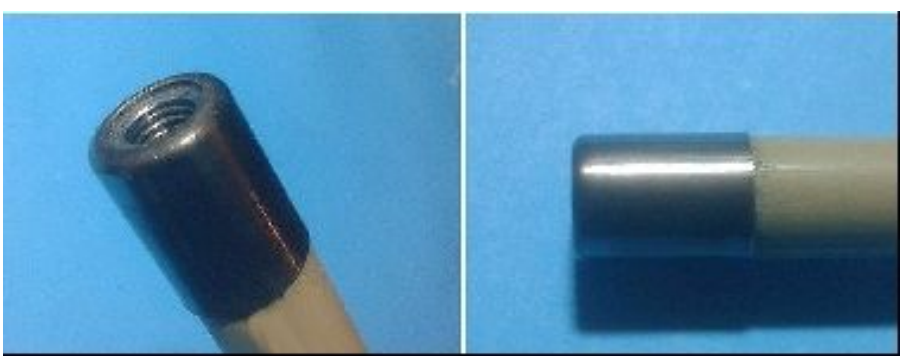
The first step is to prepare the cane by flattening any nodes so that the cane will fit inside the preformed cork handle. You can remove

material from the outside of the cane using a sharp knife or wood file.

The thread for the landing net head will pass through the thinner hole at the end of the hose ferrule, through the hex nut and into the hollow part of the bamboo cane, so if necessary hollow out the cane to a suitable size. The pith inside the cane is quite soft so this can be done quite easily with a thin knife or suitably sized flat head screwdriver.

Next, glue the hex nut inside the hose ferrule and glue the nut and ferrule assembly over the end of the bamboo cane so that the nut is resting tight against the cane.

Make sure you use plenty of glue to ensure that the nut does not twist inside the hose ferrule when inserting or removing the landing net head. I use a cocktail stick to push glue into the gaps between the hex nut and the hose ferrule.



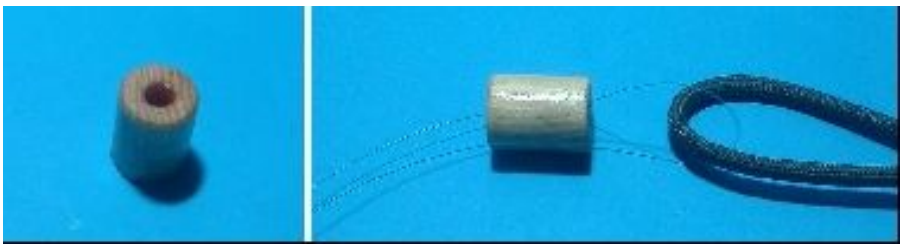
Glue the cane into the preformed cork handle leaving the hose ferrule protruding from the end of the cork.

If you prefer a blued finish to natural brass you can blue the hose ferrule following the directions in chapter two.

The short length of dowel will be glued into the end of the cork handle to protect the cork and to secure an optional lanyard made from paracord or leather.

Prepare the dowel by rounding the edges at one end. If you intend to attach a lanyard, drill a 6mm hole through the centre of the dowel. I find it more convenient to varnish the dowel before gluing it into the cork handle, but if you prefer you can leave varnishing until the handle is fully assembled.

If you are fitting a lanyard, knot it to form a loop and insert strong fishing line or fine wire through the hole in the dowel and through the loop.



Pull the loop through the dowel and check that the knot is tight.

Finally, glue the dowel plug into the cork to complete the scoop net handle.

The handle attached to a whole cane hoop landing net head. See chapter 9 for instructions on making the landing net head.

10 FLOAT WINDER

Before the invention of nylon monofilament fishing line, reel line was made from materials such as silk and braided nylon. Rigs containing floats, shot and hooks were made up separately on gut casts and attached to the end of the reel line for fishing.

These days it is not necessary to carry made up rigs as it is a quick and easy process to make up a rig directly on the reel line before fishing, but many anglers prefer to carry a selection of made up rigs to save time when setting up or changing tackle.

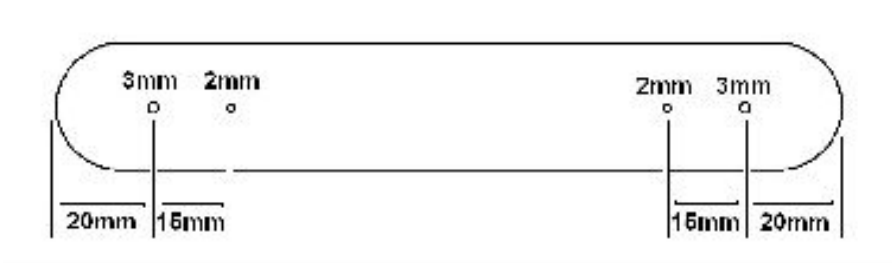
A variety of plastic winders are available, made for pole anglers, but wooden winders are easy to make and are much more attractive and in-keeping with the tackle of the traditional angler.

Materials you will need

Jumbo lollipop sticks approx 150mm x 20mm x 1.5mm
3mm Bamboo skewers or canes
Cocktail sticks
Wooden tube beads approx 15mm in length with a 3mm bore
Glue
Waterproof varnish
Wood stain (optional)

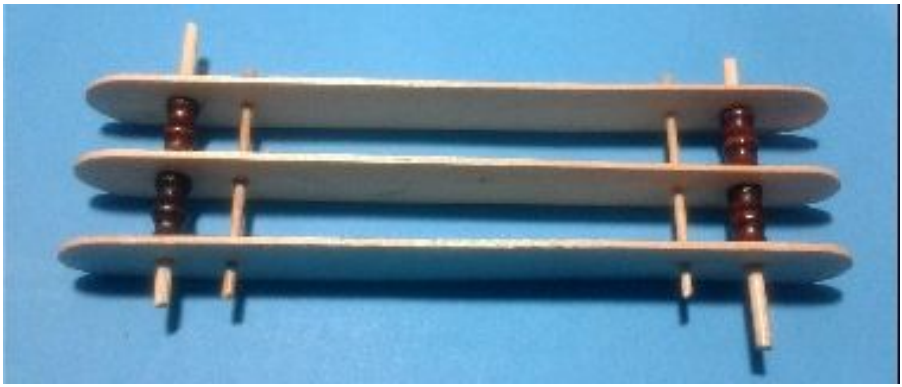
Instructions

Drill 2 holes, 3mm in diameter and 2 holes 2mm in diameter in 3 jumbo lollipop sticks in the positions shown in the following diagram.

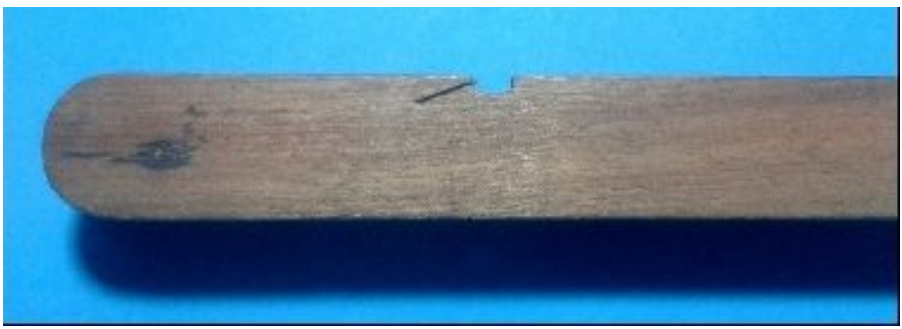


Using bamboo skewers or canes, cocktail sticks and wooden tube beads, assemble the winder as shown in the following picture and glue the skewers, cocktail sticks and beads in place.

You can omit the beads if you wish, or substitute metal or ceramic beads. A variety of tube beads are available on eBay and online wholesalers for making bracelets and necklaces.

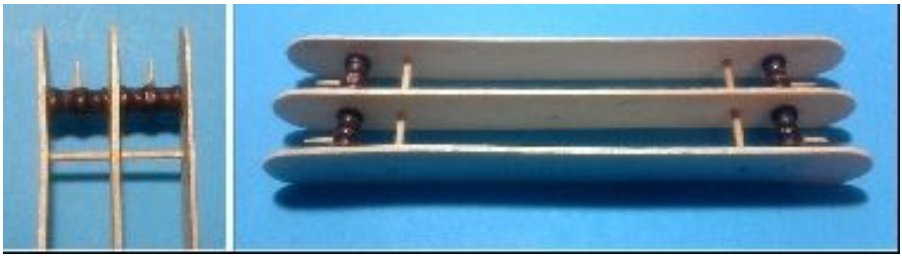


The original winders had slots cut into the sides into which the loop of the cast was inserted.

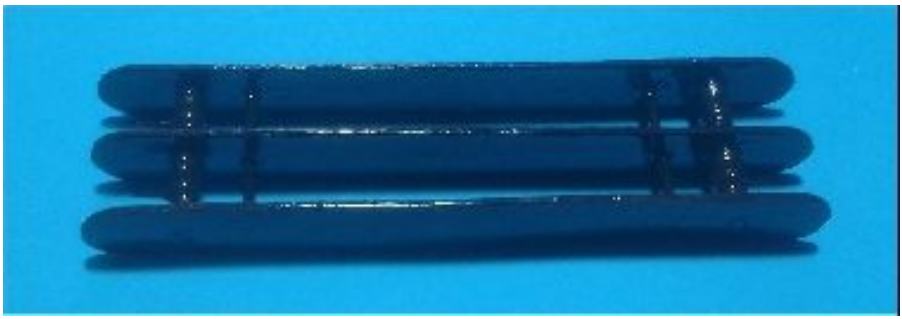


For authenticity you may use this method, but I prefer to make holes in the tube beads at the ends of the winder and glue sections of cocktail sticks into the holes to so I can use pole winder anchors to secure the rigs in place.

When the glue is dry, trim the ends of the skewers and cocktail sticks, and sand smooth.



Finally, finish the winder by staining it if desired, and applying two or three coats of waterproof varnish.



11 RIG BOARD

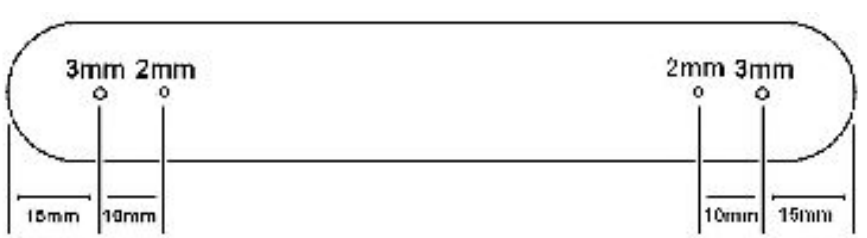
This is a variation on the float winder described in the previous chapter and is a traditional alternative to the many plastic rig boards available today.

Materials you will need

Jumbo lollipop sticks approx 150mm x 20mm x 1.5mm
3mm Bamboo skewers or canes
Cocktail sticks
Wooden tube beads approx 15mm in length with a 3mm bore
2 pieces of wood board 45mm x 75mm x 5mm
2 pieces of cork board 45mm x 75mm x 7mm
Glue
Waterproof varnish
Map pins
Wood stain (optional)

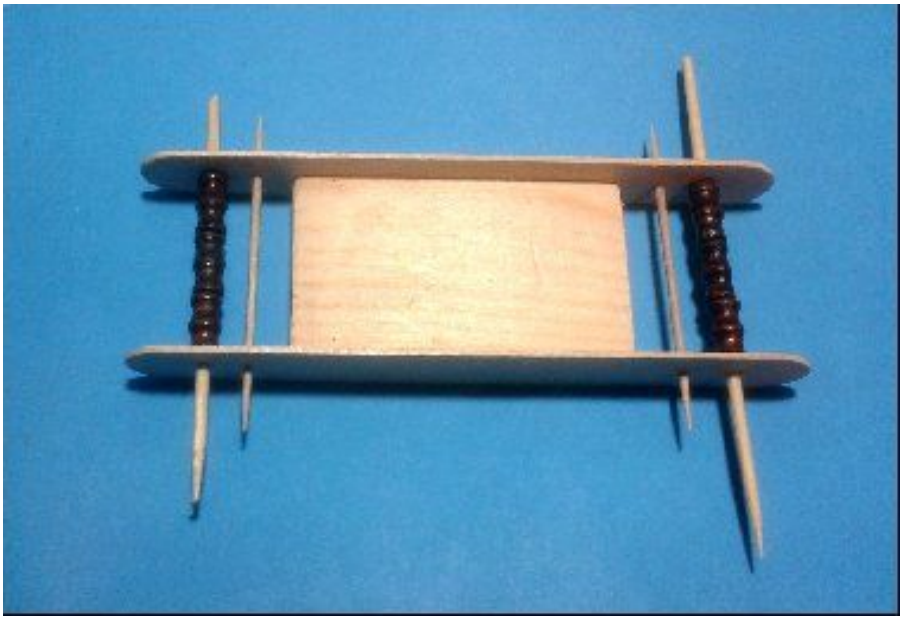
Instructions

Drill 2 holes, 3mm in diameter and 2 holes 2mm in diameter in 2 jumbo lollipop sticks in the positions shown in the following diagram.

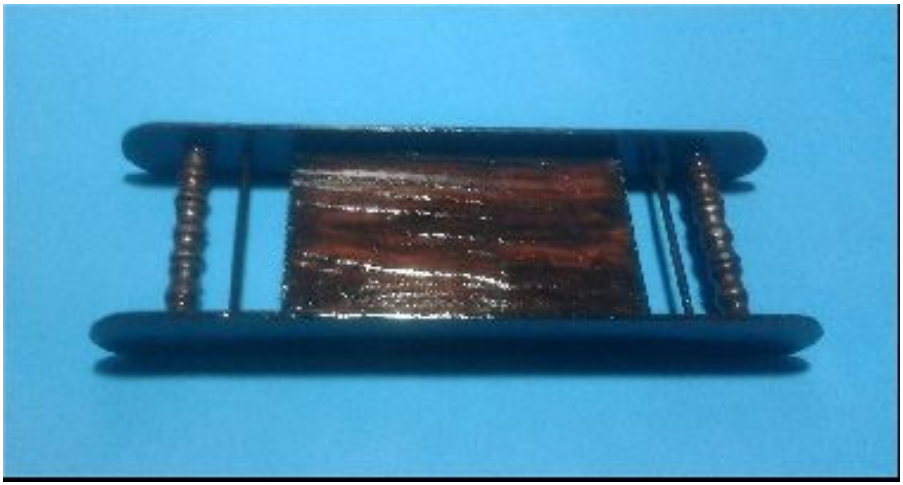


Using bamboo skewers or canes, cocktail sticks, wooden tube beads and the two pieces of wood board, assemble the rig board as shown in the following picture and secure with glue.

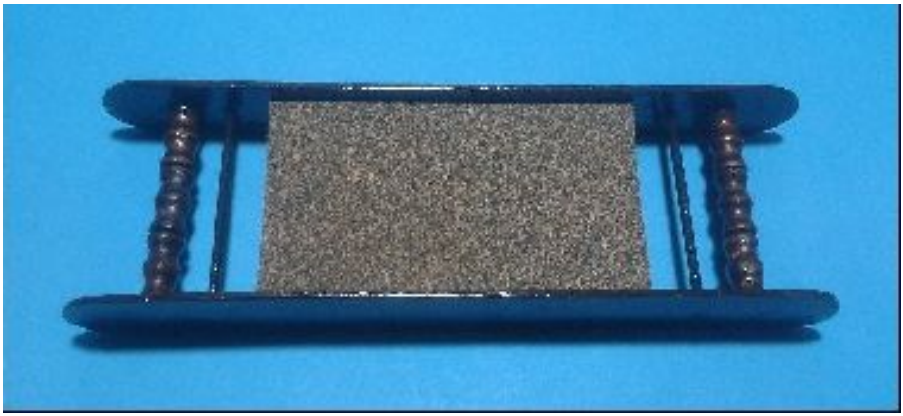
You can omit the beads if you wish, or substitute metal or ceramic beads. A variety of tube beads are available on eBay and online wholesalers for making bracelets and necklaces.



When the glue is set, trim the ends of the skewers and cocktail sticks, and sand smooth. Stain the rig board if desired and apply two or three coats of waterproof varnish.

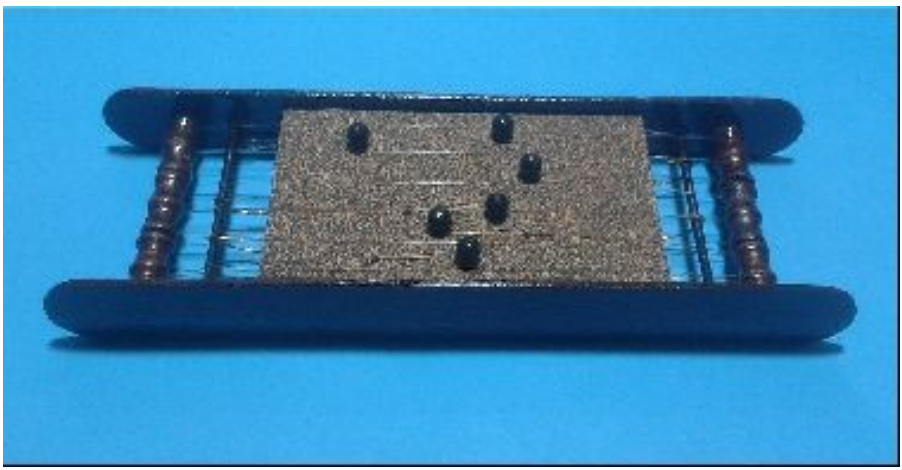


Finally glue the cork sheets to the wood boards to complete the rig board.



Hooks are retained by the cocktail sticks and the loops at the end of the rigs are secured to the cork sheet with map pins.

If the pins are too long they can be shortened by cutting with a pair of small wire cutters. They should be cut at an angle to ensure they have a sharp point to push into the cork.



12 SPLIT CANE CATAPULT

Traditional angling purists would probably say that there is nothing traditional about a catapult made from split cane. It could hardly be argued that it is the best material for making a catapult, nor at a time when split cane was being mass produced, would it have been the cheapest.

Arguably the most traditional catapult is one made from a forked branch taken from a tree, and the metal catapults made by Milbro are the traditional forerunners to modern angling catapults, particularly the Milbro 'maggapult' made specifically for the angling market.

All of that said, scrap split cane from old broken rods can be used to make an attractive catapult and it's a way of giving at least part of a worn out or broken split cane fishing rod a new purpose and lease of life.

These instructions are for a lightweight match style catapult suitable for maggots and pellets. If you require a stronger catapult you can increase the dimensions of the materials or alternatively you might prefer to make the whole cane catapult in the next chapter.

Materials you will need

One length of split cane approximately 8-10mm diameter at the thicker end and 100mm long
Two lengths of split cane approximately 6mm diameter at the thicker end and 100mm long
Two brass radiator bleed keys
Brass 8mm gas hose Y connector
Brass end cap e.g. light fitting nut or similar cap from jewellery supplies retailer approx 8-10mm internal diameter at open end
Strong thread
Whipping Thread
Whipping Sealer
Waterproof Varnish
Two part epoxy glue
Catapult elastic
Pouch

Instructions

Remove the pins that form a ‘T Bar’ from the radiator bleed keys so you are left with just the key parts as shown in the picture above.

Cut the split cane sections to length, remove old thread, rings and varnish using a knife to scrape off the varnish, and finish with fine sandpaper. For more detailed instructions on preparing reclaimed cane refer to chapter 2.

Using a small hacksaw, cut the nozzles of the brass hose connector as shown in the following picture and file any sharp edges smooth.

Next we will assemble the handle. First shape the thicker section of cane as necessary so it will fit into both the brass hose connector and the end cap. If the cane is tapered, the thinner end should be fitted into the brass tube and the thicker end into the end cap.

Assemble the handle of the catapult by gluing the cane into the hose connector and end cap.

Next we will prepare the cane for the catapult arms. First shape the thicker ends of the cane sections so they will fit into the two cut nozzles of the hose connector, removing material as necessary with a sharp knife or sandpaper to ensure a good fit.

Glue the cane arms in place and wait for the glue to set.

Slide the radiator keys over the ends of the cane arms so that the holes in the radiator keys are clear of the ends of the arms.

Use masking tape to prevent the radiator keys from sliding further down the arms, and glue them in place, ensuring that the holes are at right angles to the catapult arms, i.e. pointing outwards when you hold the catapult in from of you.

Add decorative whippings to the catapult as shown in the following picture, seal the whippings and apply two or three coats of waterproof varnish to the whippings and cane.

Finally, attach your choice of elastic and pouch to the catapult as shown in the following picture, securing the elastic with strong thread. You may wish to glue or varnish the thread for extra security.

13 WHOLE CANE CATAPULT

This easy to make catapult uses whole bamboo cane for the arms and handle, and re-purposes brass components readily available from model and DIY stores for the handle and frame.

Materials you will need

One length of bamboo cane 14mm diameter and 100mm long
Two lengths of bamboo cane 10mm diameter and 100mm long
Two lengths of brass tubing 10mm internal diameter and 30mm long
Two lengths of brass tubing 10mm diameter and 10mm long
Brass hose ferrule approx 14mm internal diameter
Brass 8mm gas hose Y connector
Walking stick ferrule 14mm internal diameter at open end
4mm Paracord
Strong thread
Whipping Thread
Whipping Sealer
Waterproof Varnish
Two part epoxy glue
Catapult elastic
Pouch

Instructions

First cut the gas hose connector as shown in the following picture, reserving the cut ends.

Glue the ends cut from the gas connector into the short sections of brass tube as shown in the following picture.

While waiting for the glue to set, make the handle by gluing the hose connector to one end of the larger diameter cane section and the walking stick ferrule to the other. Shape the cane with a sharp knife to ensure you get a snug fit.

Add decorative whippings as shown in the following picture.

Using a narrow screwdriver hollow out the two narrower lengths of cane by removing the soft pith inside. Glue the small brass tubes over the ends of the narrower lengths of cane and add decorative whippings as shown in the following picture.

Fit the longer brass tubes over the Y connector as shown in the following picture, but do not glue into place.

Insert each of the cane arms into the brass tubes and mark the depth that they push into the tube with masking tape as shown. Disassemble and glue the cane into the brass tubes using the masking tape as a guide to make sure the cane is not pushed too far into the tube.

Make two loops using the paracord and the strong thread as shown in the following picture.

The paracord loops will be used to attach the catapult elastic. Pass a loop of strong fishing line or thin wire through each of the cane arms and through the paracord loop. Before pulling the loop through the cane, coat the bottom half of the paracord liberally with two part epoxy glue.

Pull the loop through the length of the cane so that approximately 12mm of the loop extends beyond the end of the brass nozzle.

Glue the gas hose Y connector into the cane handle as shown in the following picture.

Assemble the catapult by gluing the arms over the Y connector and finish by adding further decorative whippings as shown, seal and apply two coats of waterproof varnish. If desired, blue the brass parts following the directions in chapter two.

Finally add your choice of catapult elastic and pouch to the paracord loops to make the catapult ready for use.

14 SPLIT CANE SWING TIP

A swingtip is essentially a short rod section attached to a length of flexible tube which is connected to the fishing rod by means of a special threaded adapter and threaded tip ring.

While this once popular method has lost popularity in recent years, there are occasions when the sensitivity of a swingtip will give superior bite detection to other methods and it can pay to have one in your tackle box.

If you have a piece of split cane that has been broken off the end of a rod, instead of discarding it you can easily turn it into a traditional looking swingtip.

Materials you will need

Length of split cane such as from the tip of a split cane rod
Tip ring and intermediate ring (if required)
Whipping sealer (if required)
Waterproof varnish (if required)
Tubing 3mm-4mm diameter x 80mm-100mm length
Threaded swingtip adapter

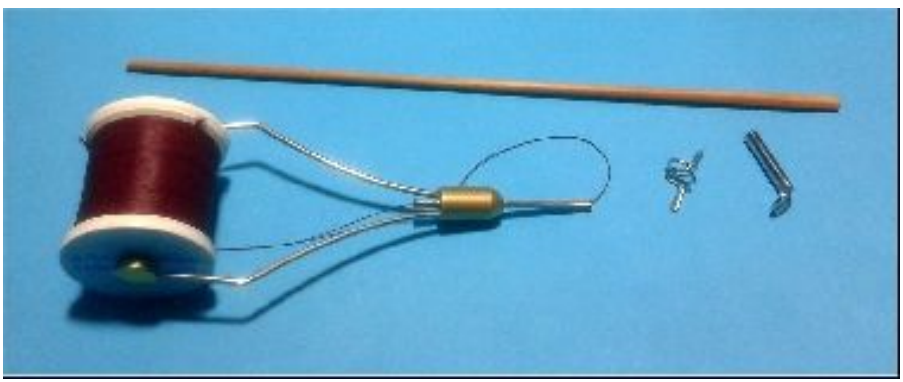
Instructions

If you are using a broken tip section and the rings and whippings are sound, you simply need to sand the end of the cane smooth and insert it into a section of tubing. You then insert a special threaded adapter, available from online tackle retailers, into the other end of the tube to complete your swingtip.

If the rings are corroded or the whippings or varnish are in a poor state, remove all rings and whippings by following the directions in chapter 2 and sand the cane smooth. You can now whip replacement rings by following the directions in chapter 2, then seal the whippings and apply two or three coats of waterproof varnish.

The4 following picture is of a broken rod tip before preparation.

Here is a picture of the same tip after the varnish, ring and whippings have been removed.



The original tip ring is too large and heavy so a smaller replacement designed for a split cane fly rod is used and a small open bridge ring is also whipped on.

The next stage is to seal the whippings and apply 2 coats of waterproof varnish to the whippings and cane.

Finally we assemble the swingtip by attaching the tubing and threaded adapter. You can use rig tubing for this, but if the diameter of the cane at the thicker end is much wider than the diameter of the threaded adapter, heart shrink tubing may be better.

You can expand the tubing if necessary to fit it over the cane by inserting a pair of narrow forceps and opening them gently to stretch the tube. If using heat shrink tubing you can heat it gently with a match to get a tight fit, alternatively if necessary you can glue it in place.

15 TRADITIONAL FLOATS

Traditional float making materials have been largely superseded by modern materials such as plastic and polystyrene which are more suitable for mass production techniques, but floats made with modern materials such as quill, cane, reed, cork and balsa still work just as well as they ever did.

There are a few makers of traditional floats who make quite excellent floats, probably to a much higher standard than was available when all floats were made using natural materials, but they come at a price.

Anyone who can master a few simple techniques can make perfectly acceptable and attractive traditional floats and catching fish using a float you have made yourself can add to the enjoyment of traditional fishing.

In this chapter I will describe the construction of a few popular patterns that are easily within the capabilities and budget of any angler.

Quill Float

These are the simplest of all floats to make, and best of all, the main part of the raw material required, the quill, can be collected for free when you are fishing!

Materials you will need

A quill, most will do, but those from crows, geese and swans are most popular.
Whipping thread
Whipping Sealer
Waterproof varnish
White paint
Florescent red, orange or yellow paint
Black permanent marker
A range of coloured paints (optional)
Wire or a small safety pin

Instructions

First you need to remove the feather from the quill. Some float makers pull the feather from the quill, but thus can result in the quill tearing so I prefer to cut the feather using sharp scissors as close to the quill as I can get and then sand the quill flat using medium grade sandpaper.

Having removed the feather from the quill, cut it to the length you require using a pair of sharp scissors.

As the quill float is to be attached at both the top and the bottom, you could just strengthen the thin end of the quill by whipping and varnishing and use it 'double rubber' but it is more traditional to have a loop or eye at the base of the float.

Originally these were made by attaching a brass ring through a loop made from the quill itself, but alternatives are to simply form a loop of quill, or to whip a small eye on to the quill. Eyes can be made by twisting a length of wire

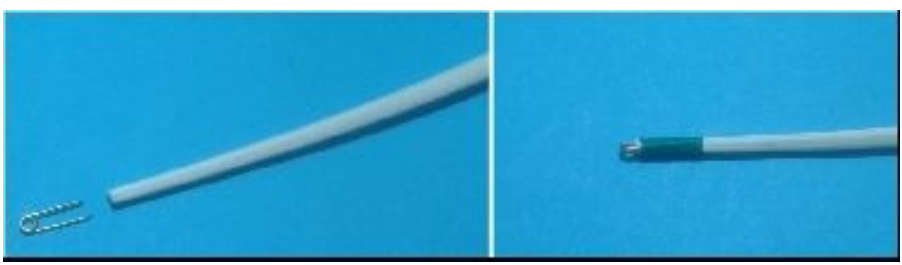
around a small nail, or by cutting an eye from a small safety pin.

Making a quill loop

Cut the quill as shown in the following diagram, fold it over to form a loop, optionally inserting a small brass ring, then whip over the loop using the techniques described in chapter two.

Attaching a wire loop

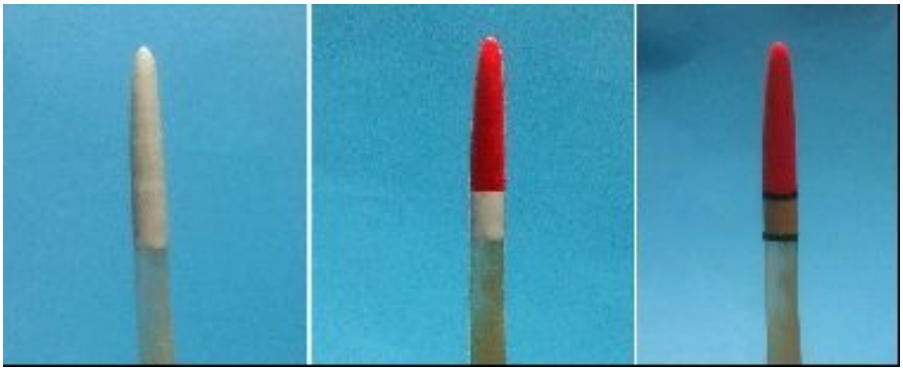
Whip a wire loop formed by twisting wire around a small nail or cut from a safety pin to the base of the quill as shown in the following picture using the techniques described in chapter two.



Painting the quill

The quill needs a bright top so it can be seen when fishing, so you will need some florescent paint for this, but first apply a base coat of white paint as without this the florescent paint will not be bright.

Any matt white paint will do, I use white emulsion that I buy in ‘tester pots’ from my local DIY store.



It is up to you how you paint the float, but I prefer to have a band of florescent color and a band of white separated by thin lines of black. You can add the black lines when the paint is dry using a permanent marker, or if you prefer, you can use thin whipping thread instead as pictured above.

Finishing the float

When the quill has been fully painted and is dry, you can add whippings to strengthen the float and for decoration. Add the whippings using the directions in chapter 2, seal the whippings and apply several coats of outdoor waterproof varnish.

You can apply the varnish using a brush, but if you are planning to make several floats it will be quicker to dip the floats in varnish. Whichever method you use, hang the floats by the loop in the base to allow any excess varnish to drip off while they dry. If you notice a bulge of varnish forming on the tip, you can wick this off using a small piece of cloth.

The finished float, ready for use.

Early quill floats had minimal whipping as shown on the left in the following picture, thread only being used to attach loops and strengthen the quill to prevent it breaking.

These days many anglers prefer more thread to be used to make the float look more attractive as shown by the floats in the following picture on the right.

The amount of thread and other decoration used may affect the shotting capacity or action of the float in water, but in practice the effect is usually slight and the float works perfectly well.

For an even more decorative float you can add one or more bands of coloured paint and whip thread between them, the choice is yours.

Other types of float

Using the techniques for making a quill float, many other types of traditional float can be created, only the base construction of the float is different, attaching loops, painting, whipping and sealing are the same.

Here are directions for making base floats for a few popular patterns.

Bodied Quills

Using thin quills such as crow quill, bodied Avon, Ducker and Waggler floats can be made using pre-shaped cork or balsa bodies that can be purchased on eBay and from online retailers.

Quills are rarely straight, and it can be difficult to insert the quill into the cork or balsa body. To overcome this, you can use a thin piece of cane or bamboo skewer through the body, to which the cut quill is attached.

To make an Avon style float, the body is attached near the top of the quill, to make a Ducker it is attached near the bottom and to make a Bodied Waggler or Antennae the float is constructed like an Avon but the eye is whipped at the thicker end, the thinner more sensitive end becoming the tip.

The following picture shows the basic construction of these three types of float, Avon on the left, Ducker in the middle, and Bodied Waggler or Antennae on the right. Next to each is an example of the completed float after painting, whipping and varnishing.

I prefer to use a cane base on Ducker and Antenna floats as I find this to be more durable that quill.

Reed Wagglers

Wagglers can be made using Sarkandas Reed or Norfolk Reed. You can obtain quantities of Sarkandas and Norfolk reed in various thicknesses from eBay and online retailers.

For a more decorative appearance, reed can be flamed using the techniques for flaming cane described in chapter 2, but be careful not to leave the reed in the flame for more than a second or two as it can easily catch fire.

Straight Wagglers are made by cutting a length of reed, sanding the top to make a slight dome shape and gluing a short piece of thin cane or bamboo skewer into the base to which an eye is whipped.

Insert Wagglers are made in the same way as straight wagglers, but a second section of thin cane or bamboo skewer is glued into the top to provide more sensitive bite detection.

16 SMALL TOOLS

While not all are strictly traditional, a number of small hand tools for anglers have been evolved in the past few years such as baiting needles and bait drills.

While these are easily and cheaply obtainable, many incorporate modern plastics in their construction and look out of place in a traditional angler's tackle box.

The metal parts such as drill bits and pulling/latch needles (used for sewing and crafts) can be bought separately and inserted into a wooden handle for a more traditional look. Handles can also be made with inexpensive wooden tube beads used for making necklaces and bracelets.

This chapter contains directions for making the following tools:

Baiting needle
Bait drills
Knot picker
Hook threader
Bread punch
Meat punch
Loop tyer

Baiting Needle

Materials you will need

Wooden tube beads
Glue
Pulling/latch needle

Instructions

Make a handle by gluing two or three of the tube beads to a length of 3mm cane.

When the glue is dry, drill a small hole, a small bait drill is ideal for this, and glue the needle inside the hole.

The finished baiting needle:

Bait Drills

Materials you will need

Wooden tube beads
Glue
Twist drill bit 1.5mm to 3mm

Instructions

For smaller drill bits, make a handle using beads and 3mm cane, leaving enough room at one end to glue in the drill bit, for larger drill bits the beads can be glued directly on to the drill stem.

When the glue is dry the hole at the end of the handle can then be filled with a small amount of wood filler.

The finished bait drills:

Knot Picker

Materials you will need

Wooden tube beads
Glue
Long darning needle

Instructions

The needle should be thick enough for the beads to be a reasonably tight fit, so just a coating of glue should be enough to fix the beads in place.

When the glue is dry the hole at the end of the handle can then be filled with a small amount of wood filler.

The finished knot picker:

Hook Threader

Materials you will need

Wooden tube beads
Glue
Beading needle

Instructions

Make a handle by gluing two or three of the tube beads to a length of 3mm cane.

When the glue is dry, drill a small hole, a small bait drill is ideal for this, and glue in the bead needle.

The finished hook threader:

Bread Punch

Materials you will need

Brass tube 8mm diameter x 8mm length
Dowel 8mm diameter x 70mm length
Glue
Waterproof varnish
Wood stain (optional)
Whipping thread (optional)
Whipping sealer/colour preserver (optional)

Instructions

Using a small hacksaw, cut a slot in the brass tube to a depth of 2mm as shown in the following picture.

Sand the dowel to reduce its diameter for a distance of 4mm from one end so that the brass tube fits snugly as shown in the following picture:

Stain the dowel if desired and then apply two coats of waterproof varnish.

Glue the brass tube over the dowel then optionally add decorative whipping, seal and varnish.

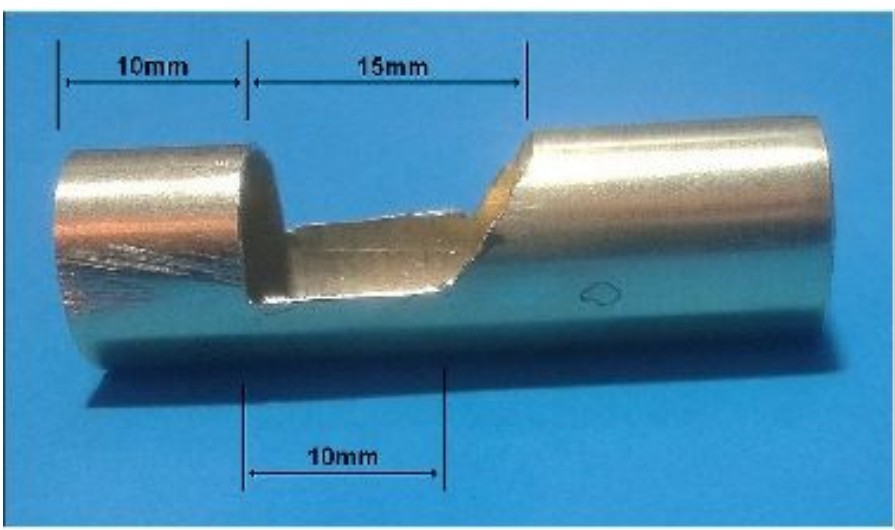
Meat Punch

Materials you will need

Brass tube 12mm diameter x 40mm length
Dowel 12mm diameter x 90mm length
Glue
Waterproof varnish
Wood stain (optional)
Whipping thread (optional)
Whipping sealer/colour preserver (optional)

Instructions

Using a small hacksaw, cut the brass tube as shown in the following picture and smooth the cut edges with a small file or abrasive paper.



Cut the dowel to match the angle of the cut in the brass tube as shown in the following picture:

Stain the dowel if desired and then apply two coats of waterproof varnish.

Glue the brass tube over the dowel making sure that the taper on the dowel lines up with the angled cut in the brass tube.

Optionally add decorative whipping, seal and varnish.

Loop Tyer

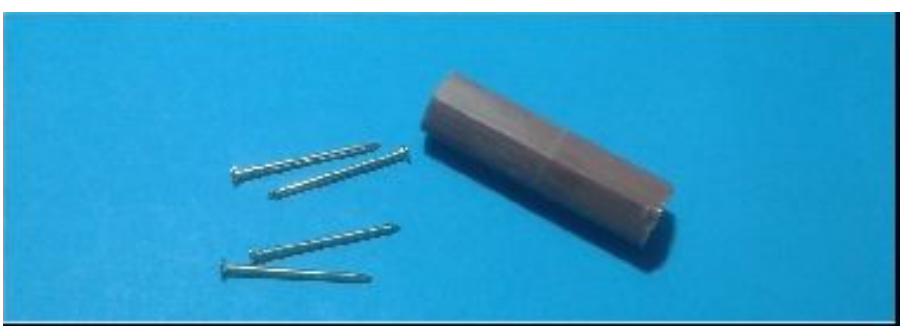
Materials you will need

4 Brass pins
Dowel or scrap split cane 15mm diameter x 40mm length
Glue
Waterproof varnish
Wood stain (optional)
Whipping thread (optional)
Whipping sealer/colour preserver (optional)

Instructions

Make two holes in each end of the dowel, 8mm apart at one end and 5mm apart at the other.

Cut the heads from the pins, file smooth and glue into the holes in the dowel so that one pin on each end protrudes from the dowel by 15 mm and the other by 10mm.



Optionally stain, add decorative whippings, seal and apply two coats of waterproof varnish.

17 TRADITIONAL TACKLE STORAGE

If you want to transport your tackle to your swim in something more traditional than a plastic tackle box, there are alternatives that you can make, modify or buy.

Terminal Tackle Tins

Before modern purpose built tackle boxes, anglers mostly either made their own boxes to store terminal tackle or re-cycled other containers such as cigar boxes and tobacco or OXO tins.

Some manufacturers produced small metal boxes containing shot etc. which you may be able to find. Many also made boxes carrying advertisements which dealers used to supply small items of tackle such as swivels.

Vintage boxes and specialist tins such as the Allcocks ‘Handy Outfit’ do appear in auctions from time to time, but as these are popular they are usually more expensive than more generic alternatives.

Tobacco and OXO tins can be acquired quite cheaply in auctions, particularly the eBay online auction site. The smaller boxes can be used to store small items of tackle such as swivels, shot and hooks, while the larger OXO boxes make a good general tackle box for storing all of your terminal tackle.

Small tins can be used to store tackle in packets such as hooks etc. or can be divided into sections using thin sheet metal or wood strips to store a range of tackle items.

Wood Tackle Boxes

If you would like to make your own wooden tackle box, you can avoid much of the hard work if you purchase a plain wooden box for a few pounds, customise it with trays and compartments to suit your requirements and then 'age' it by staining and varnishing.

With a little effort and inventiveness, you can convert the plain box above to a perfect storage solution for your vintage fishing tackle.

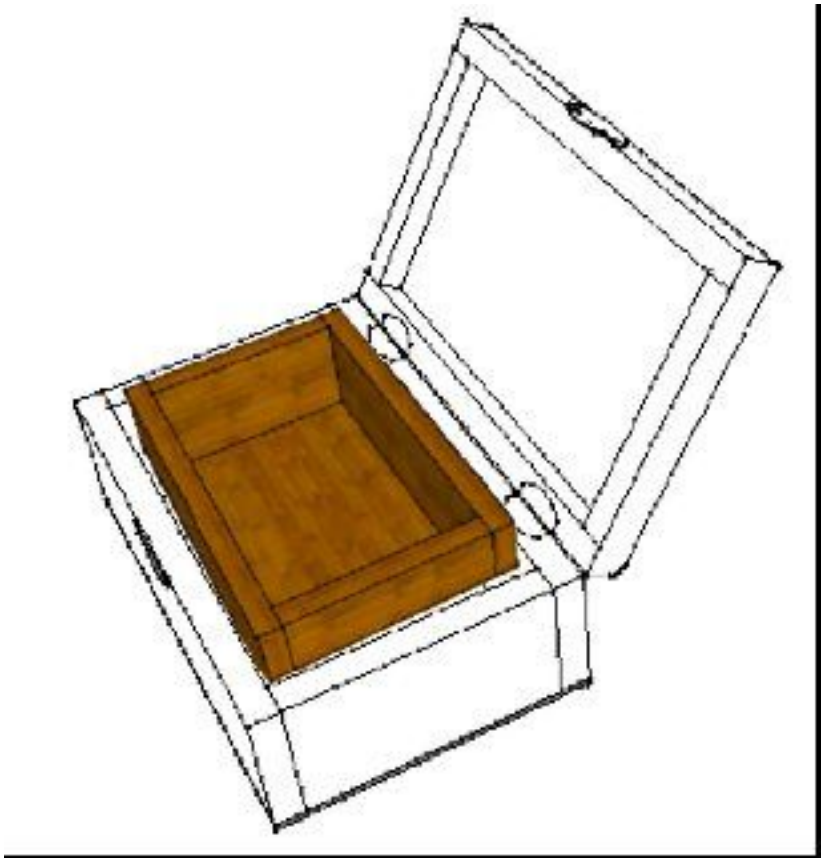
These boxes are available in several different sizes for a few pounds each. The eBay auction site is a good source of these, you will find many in the ‘Crafts’ section.

The following general directions will provide the information you need to make a traditional compact storage box for your terminal tackle.

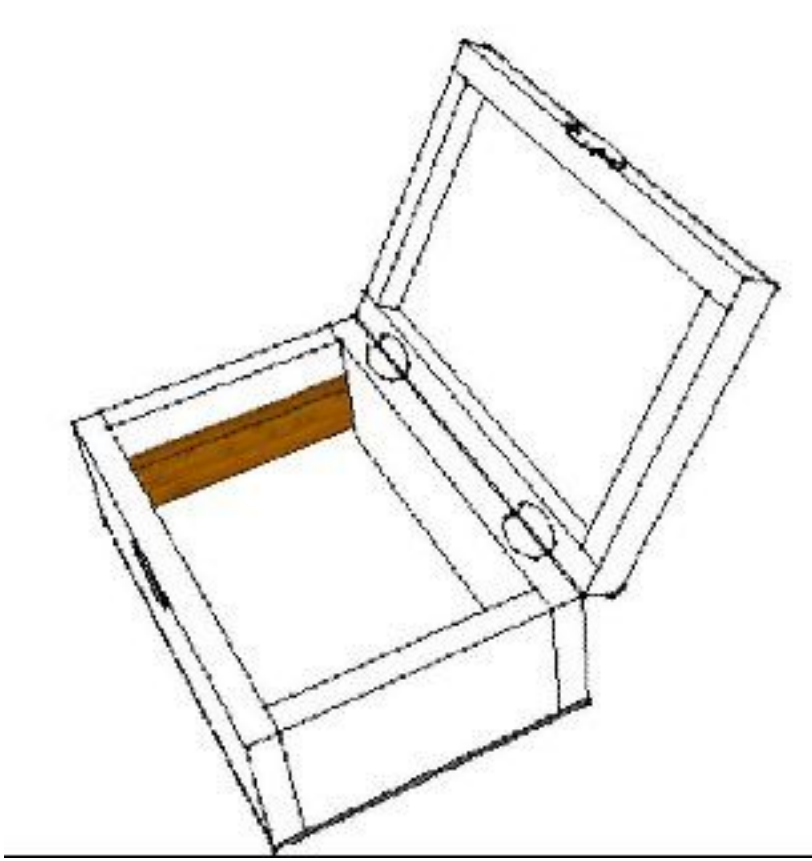
The first thing to note is that most of these boxes do not have a flush fitting lid, so you cannot simply divide up the box as if it is turned upside down or on its side the tackle will fall out of the compartments.

You could just fill the recess in the lid with foam to keep your tackle in place, but as the recess is usually quite deep this would waste a lot of space. I prefer to construct a tray that fits snugly inside the box to provide two tier storage so I can store many items in their own compartments.

Make a tray that will just fit inside the base of the box of approximately half of the total height of the inner area including the recess in the lid. This should give you a tray that is a little less than the depth of the base of the box.



Next, glue two strips of wood inside the base of the box at the narrow sides to form shelves on which the tray will sit. These strips should be the height of the total inner area of the box, less the height of the tray.



Now it is simply a case of dividing both the tray and the base of the box to suit the tackle you want to store. When closed, the tray will retain items in the lower section and the lid will retain items in the tray.

You can stain the box if you wish, and you should apply several coats of waterproof varnish inside and out. A lining of self-adhesive green baize, again available for little cost, adds to the vintage appearance.

One last thing I like to do to finish the box is to replace the closure mechanism for one that is more robust as these boxes tend to be supplied with cheap flimsy clasps.

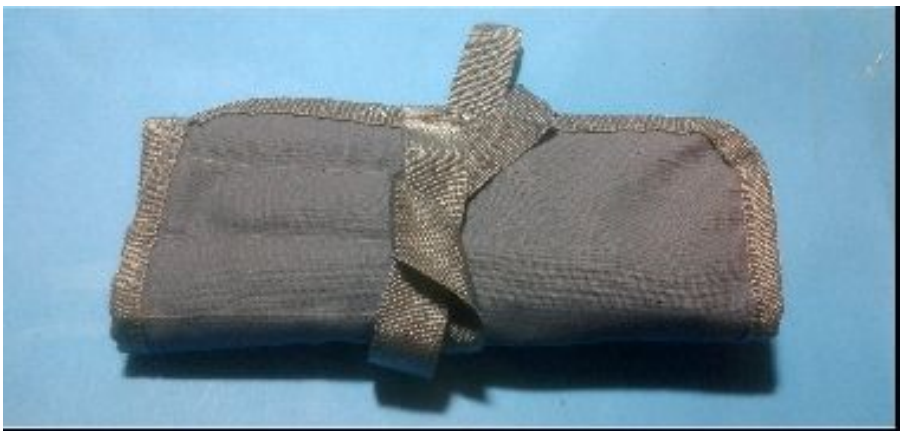
The finished box, stocked with tackle:

SPLIT
SOFT
SHOT
SPLIT SHOT

SPLIT
SOFT
SHOT
SPLIT SHOT

Float and Tool Roll

A popular traditional alternative to a float tube for storage of floats and other items such as disgorgers and forceps was the float and tool roll usually made from canvas or cotton.



Although you are unlikely to see these advertised for fishing nowadays, you can still buy similar items for a few pounds offered as storage for small tools and surgical instruments.

Hook Storage

Hooks and made up hook lengths can be stored in glassine bags. These are sold for storage of stamps and seeds and can be acquired in bulk quite cheaply.

A convenient size for made up hook lengths is approximately 60mm x 60mm and these can either be stored separately, or stapled into card folders with the hook and line information written or printed on the outside.

A vintage hook wallet, if you can find one, is ideal for hook packet storage. Similar wallets are available made with leather and suede covers for storing fly fishing leaders and are a traditional alternative to modern hook wallets.

18 SOURCING MATERIALS

Most of the materials you need to make the items in this book can be purchased from local and online retailers. Materials for making and repairing fishing rods are usually available from your local fishing tackle shop or can be purchased from an online specialist retailer or eBay.

General DIY materials such as varnish, dowel, brass tubing and other materials re-purposed from plumbing supplies should be available from your local DIY store. Bamboo cane that is quite suitable for making bank sticks, rod rests and landing net handles is available from garden centres.

Some of the items call for split cane which is not generally available, and when is, can be very expensive. You can, though, obtain old fishing rods and odd fishing rod sections that are not worth the trouble of restoring from local second hand shops and the eBay auction web site for very little money.

Old dilapidated rods and bundles of split cane rod sections are well worth buying as they can yield useful lengths of split cane and other spare parts such as rod rings, ferrules and brass fittings that can be re-used.

It is always worth a look in bargain and pound shops too, where you can usually find a variety of inexpensive items that, with a little creativity, can be used to make your own traditional fishing tackle.

Quills for float making can, of course, be collected in the spring while you are fishing or taking a walk in the country.

Finally, here are some online retailers where you can get specialist items such as thread, rod rings and other materials needed to make the items in this book.

For rod rings, thread and other hardware:

Hopkins & Holloway: http://www.hopkinsholloway.co.uk
Guides n Blanks: http://www.guidesnblanks.com
Rod Rings and Things: http://www.rodringsandthings.co.uk
Breakaway Tackle: http://www.breakaway-tackle.co.uk

Meadow Fishery: http://www.meadowfishery.com
Jakes Custom Rods: http://www.jakescustomrods.co.uk

For almost everything:

eBay: http://www.ebay.co.uk

19 FINAL THOUGHTS

If, like me, you prefer to fish with tackle that is more at home in an earlier time than on today's modern commercial waters, I hope that you have found something in this book that you can make and use to enhance your enjoyment.

If you would like to comment on this book, suggest projects for later editions or send details or photographs of tackle you have made following the directions in this book I'd be pleased to hear from you. You can contact me by email at:

feedback@makeyourowntraditionalfishingtackle.co.uk

Good luck and enjoy your fishing!

Paul Duffield

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Duffield describes himself as a ‘traditional angler’. Having been born early in the second half of the 20th century and fished for over 40 years, he is attempting to rediscover and recapture the magic and excitement that he experienced when he first began fishing at 10 years old.

A vintage fishing tackle enthusiast and restorer, Paul fishes with cane rods, centrepin reels and quill floats and prefers to spend a few hours on a wild stream to modern stocked stillwaters.